

PUBLIC HEARING of the Town Council held Thursday, May 31, 2007 at 7:00 o'clock P.M. in the auditorium of the Burrillville High School, 425 East Avenue, Harrisville, for and within the Town of Burrillville.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Council President Nancy F. Binns; Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Kevin M. Blais, Margaret L. Dudley, John M. Karmozyn, Jr. and Cynthia L. Roe.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilor Norman C. Mainville was excused.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Burrillville School Committee/Department: Mary Margaret Karmozyn, Chair, Paul J. Couture, Dorothy A. Cardon, Joan Cote, Peter Lambert, Steven Welford, Superintendent of Schools, Robin Kimatian, Business Administrator and Paul Barrette, Technology Director

Burrillville Budget Board: Arthur R. Hurley, Chair and David C. Ketcham

Relative to discussing the School Budget

NOTE: The public hearing was duly advertised in the Woonsocket Call on May 11, 16 and 23, 2007.

1. Comments from the Budget Board

Arthur R. Hurley, Chairman of the Budget Board, addressed the Town Council on behalf of the Budget Board. Mr. Hurley thanked Steve Welford, Superintendent of Schools, for his work on the FY2008 School Department budget. Mr. Hurley voiced concern that the School Committee had not approved the proposed budget. Mr. Hurley discussed the budgetary process for the School Department, the School Department's unfunded liabilities, bonds related to school facilities, repairs to the Levy Rink and potential savings in health care insurance. Mr. Hurley acknowledged Mr. Welford's efforts to address these issues.

2. Comments from Mary Margaret Karmozyn, Chair, Burrillville School Committee

Mary Margaret Karmozyn, Chair, Burrillville School Committee spoke of the transitional year of administrative change. Ms. Karmozyn introduced Paul Barrette, Director of Technology, mentioned other new administrators and indicated that the assistant superintendent position would remain on hold through FY2008.

Ms. Karmozyn discussed the mission of the school department. Ms. Karmozyn referred to challenges presented by federal, state and local mandates, contractual law, and the tax cap. Ms. Karmozyn reported on the performance status of the various schools, noting that progress is being made.

Ms. Karmozyn thanked Dorothy Cardon, Paul Couture and Peter Lambert, members of the Budget Subcommittee, for their many hours of work in developing the FY2008 budget proposal.

3. Comments from Steven Welford, Superintendent of the Burrillville School Department

Steven Welford acknowledged the support of Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, the School Committee and the school department administrative staff. He congratulated the schools on recent classifications by the State of Rhode Island, discussed the High School Administration's efforts related to the accreditation and addressed plans for continued improvement.

Mr. Welford, Superintendent of Schools, discussed the collaborative effort with the Town and the Budget Board in developing the budget. He announced that the School Committee had approved the budget at their meeting the night before. He went on to introduce Paul Barrette, Technology Director, who had prepared a Power Point presentation of the steps that had been used to develop the proposed budget for the next year. In reviewing the budget process, Mr. Welford explained the use of a "zero based" budget and the recognition of the tax cap law.

Mr. Welford made a Power Point presentation, discussing challenges to the department, including inaccurate enrollment projections, state mandated 330 minutes of high school instruction, system-wide class

size issues, concern with the drop out rate, special education compliance issues, federal mandates for teacher certification, lack of current textbooks, shortage of materials and supplies, aging equipment, NEASC accreditation and negotiations with the teachers.

Mr. Welford said that the FY2008 proposal begins to address many of these issues, with the exception of negotiations. He elaborated on the philosophy by which the proposal had been developed and addressed issues in greater detail.

Mr. Welford reviewed the steps considered in developing the FY2008 budget, including: reductions in staffing, replacement of retirees with lower step teachers, return of out-of-district placements, consolidation/reduction of transportation, possible elementary redistricting, reduction in utilities, review of contracted services and athletics/extra-curricular activities, reduction of ancillary special education costs, and a proposed statewide bidding program. Mr. Welford discussed the steps in greater detail. Personnel changes were discussed and significant budget changes were reviewed.

Mr. Welford said that the budget request was a 2.72 percent increase over the FY2007 appropriation, which the Department believes to be within the 5.25 percent tax cap. Mr. Welford credited the administrative team for a job well done in developing a budget that addresses the department's priorities.

Councilor Margaret L. Dudley asked for clarification of School Committee expenses; Mr. Welford detailed that expense, i.e. dues and workshops. Councilor Dudley raised a concern that the line items for textbooks, library books and periodicals were insufficient. Councilor Dudley spoke in support of the increase in the line item for building and equipment repair. Councilor Dudley discussed the School Committee health insurance benefit.

4. Comments from Michael C. Wood, Town Manager

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, congratulated the School Committee on their selection of Steven Welford as Superintendent of Schools and spoke of the constructive, respectful working relationship between the school department and municipality. Mr. Wood spoke of the challenges to the school department, addressed the problems associated with the tax cap legislation, and emphasized the importance of maintaining a productive relationship moving forward.

Mr. Wood described the proposed budget as pragmatic and within the 5.25 percent cap. Mr. Wood echoed Arthur R. Hurley's concern with the school department's unfunded liabilities. Mr. Wood suggested that continued improvements achieved through the current budget could continue, with cooperation in the course of collective bargaining.

Mr. Wood said that the town budget includes a certain amount of money for state aid. He said that if more state aid is received, the school and taxpayers' needs would be taken into account. Mr. Wood asked that the school department provide a priority list of add-backs for the Town Council to consider if the money is available.

On behalf of the Town Council, President Nancy F. Binns commended to the Superintendent, Budget Subcommittee and School Administration. She commented that the budget request was the clearest, most comprehensive and coherent presentation of a school department budget in her experience on the Town Council.

5. Public Comment: None

6. VOTED to close the public hearing.

Motion by Councilor Wallace F. Lees. Seconded by Councilor John M. Karmozyn, Jr. The motion was unanimous by the six members present. Voting in favor of the motion were Council President Nancy F. Binns; Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Kevin M. Blais, Margaret L. Dudley, John M. Karmozyn, Jr. and Cynthia L. Roe. Councilor Norman C. Mainville was excused.

7. Town Council Deliberation

Councilor John M. Karmozyn, Jr. asked whether the school department budget could be increased more than 2.72 percent while

remaining within the overall 5.25 percent cap. Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, commented that any additional state aid received would be outside the tax cap. He reviewed the possibility of an increase in state aid.

Councilor Cynthia L. Roe commended the efforts in developing the budget. She voiced concerns related to the high school accreditation, textbooks and the drop out rate. She agreed that the textbook line item was insufficient. Councilor Roe questioned the lack of an adult education or a GED program. Councilor Roe acknowledged that student success cannot simply be tied to teacher performance but suggested that the taxpayers would be justified in correlating high taxes and relatively high teacher salaries with the concerns she listed.

8. MOTION to adjourn at 8:25 P.M.

Motion by Councilor Wallace F. Lees. Seconded by Councilor John M. Karmozyn, Jr.

Councilor Kevin M. Blais asked how the buildings could be properly maintained if maintenance positions were eliminated.

Councilor Blais asked for clarification of the Levy Rink budget. It was noted that the Levy Rink has a separate revolving account funded by rink receipts. This matter was discussed.

Mr. Welford reviewed a study of the custodial staff, which indicated that the staff could be reduced. Mr. Welford explained changes made to the staff for efficiency and increased production and supervision. Mr. Welford said that the result has been more work with fewer people at a more reasonable cost. The matter was discussed.

Mr. Welford discussed the plan for a program of maintenance, including roofing, structure and infrastructure. He said that the department is undertaking a full building assessment.

Mr. Welford expanded on the Levy Rink budget, saying that the rink is self-sustaining. He confirmed that, with the exception of the manager's salary, the rink does not operate under the school budget and the funds are not commingled. The School Department, he said, oversees the rink. Mr. Welford said that the rink is marginally self-sustaining, but not to the extent, at this point, that repairs/maintenance could be funded from receipts. Mr. Welford voiced confidence that, in time, it would be.

The motion was unanimous by the six members present. Voting in favor of the motion were Council President Nancy F. Binns; Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Kevin M. Blais, Margaret L. Dudley, John M. Karmozyn, Jr. and Cynthia L. Roe. Councilor Norman C. Mainville was excused.

The public hearing was taped. The tape is on file with the record of the hearing.

Cynthia H. Ketcham, Deputy Town Clerk